

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	STIMSON 4 – RECIPROCAL ACCESS AGREEMENT – SWLO PORTION
Proposed Implementation Date:	JULY 2014
Proponent:	DNRC & STIMSON LUMBER COMPANY
Location:	WHISKEY GULCH, RATTLER GULCH & FLAT-PARDEE
County:	LEWIS & CLARK, GRANITE, POWELL, MINERAL

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proposed action is a mutual swap (reciprocal) of road access easements across each other's property. The overall project involves lands in both DNRC SW and NW Land Offices. This EA document addresses the SW Land Office portion of the reciprocal access project.

This SWLO portion of the Stimson 4 Reciprocal Access proposal involves:

- 1) Whiskey Gulch – a DNRC acquisition of a permanent all lawful purpose easement on approximately 1 mile of existing roads across Stimson Lumber Company (SLC) lands in Section 1, T14N-R7W and Section 36, T15N-R7W to benefit approximately 480 acres of (common school) trust land in Section 36 T15N-R7W.
- 2) Rattler Gulch - a DNRC grant of a permanent all lawful purpose easement on approximately .4 miles of existing road across (common school) trust land in Section 36 T12N-R13W to benefit approximately 82 acres of SLC land in Section 25 T12N-R13W.
- 3) Flat-Pardee – a DNRC grant of permanent all lawful purpose easements on approximately 1.78 miles of existing roads across school trust lands in sections 10, 14 & 15 T17N-R26W and .34 miles of new road to be constructed (Portion of Segment I-J) across school trust land in Section 10 T17N-R26W to benefit approximately 311 acres of SLC land in Sections 14 & 15 T17N-R26W;
plus
a DNRC acquisition of permanent all lawful purpose easements on approximately 1.90 miles of existing roads across SLC land in Section 14 & 15 T17N-R26W and .11 miles of new road to be constructed (portion of Segment I-J) across SLC land in Section 15 T17N-R26W to benefit approximately 337 acres of school trust lands in Sections 14 & 15 T17N-R26W.

Maps of the three areas are attached.

NOTE: There is also a NWLO portion of this project proposal that is documented under a separate EA.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Public scoping for this project involved the following adjacent landowners;

Whiskey Gulch – DNRC acquisition only was not scoped;

Rattler Gulch – Jim Davis, Richard Goldberg, Kathy Dutton and DNRC Anaconda Unit;

Flat-Pardee – Nate Kegel, USFS Superior Ranger District.

DNRC resource specialists; Garrett Schairer (Wildlife), Jeff Collins (Soil, Water & Fish), and Patrick Rennie (Cultural/Archaeological) were consulted for environmental effects evaluation and for potential mitigations. DNRC technical specialist Norm Kuennen provided technical right-of-way expertise.

In August of 2013 a scoping letter was sent to the CSKT Tribes for the Club-Charette Fire Salvage timber sale project. The general project area for the salvage timber sale includes the new road construction segment proposed within the Flat Pardee area.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

None

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

Two alternatives are being considered:

No Action – Under this alternative, DNRC would not swap road access easements. All other unrelated activities (permits, leases, licenses, contracts) would continue.

Action - Cooperatively acquire and grant road access easements as outlined in the Stimson 4 Reciprocal Access Agreement and described above.

<p>III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The easements are primarily for use of existing roads with a minor amount of new road construction (Segment I-J Flat-Pardee) proposed. All roads are native material and segments of the roads (Rattler Gulch and Whiskey Gulch) cross clayey soils that are subject to rutting if operated on when wet. Recent timber sale projects as well as fire related repairs in the Flat Pardee parcels, have addressed road maintenance needs. No unusual or unstable sites were identified on the existing or proposed roads.

No Action: No impacts above existing conditions.

Action: Shared use of existing roads, and .45 miles of new road construction (soil disturbance) is proposed. New road would be built to BMP standards and disturbed areas would be re-vegetated. Road maintenance obligations would be required of the new easement holders with maintenance responsibilities proportionate to their use. There is low risk of direct, in-direct or cumulative effects compared to existing conditions.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

The easements are primarily for use of existing roads with minor new road construction (Segment I-J Flat Pardee) proposed. Recent timber sale projects as well as fire related repairs in the Flat Pardee parcels, have addressed road maintenance needs. There are no stream crossings on the Whisky Gulch parcel and no effects on water quality. There is one stream crossing (on a gated DNRC road) in the Flat Pardee parcel. This crossing met BMP standards when inspected in the fall of 2013. There is one stream crossing on a DNRC road in the Rattler parcel. This crossing also met BMP standards when inspected in the fall of 2013.

No Action: No impacts above existing condition.

Action: The new road construction (Segment I-J Flat-Pardee) is proposed along a dry ridge in the SE Section 10, T17N, R26W. No new stream crossings are proposed.

Road use associated with utilization of easement rights granted has the potential to increase traffic. DNRC will complete road inventories of road conditions and maintenance needs on the state roads as part of periodic road inventories. Road maintenance needs associated with the easement will require performance of maintenance proportionate to use. Traffic is not expected to add more than a low risk of direct, indirect or cumulative effects to water quality above existing conditions, as the increased use is expected to be limited and maintenance is expected to be periodically completed over time.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

No Action: No impacts

Action: Road use associated with utilization of easement rights granted has the potential to increase traffic. Noise and dust associated with increased traffic is not expected to cause major impacts as the increased use is expected to be minimal and there are no residential structures immediately adjacent to the roadways. The construction of new road (segment I-J Flat-Pardee) would cause a minor short term increase in particulate and dust associated with construction activities. Proposed road construction activities are located well away from residences and areas of concentrated human use.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

Noxious weeds, mainly spotted knapweed, and houndstongue occur along portions of the existing road right of ways.

No Action: No impacts

Action: The granting of easement rights on existing roads is not expected to result in changes to existing vegetative conditions. Road use associated with these easements has the potential to introduce noxious weeds to the surface and shoulders of the road. The easements granted will include requirements for the grass seeding new road construction and management treatments of new noxious weeds, should they become established within the road right-of-way.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

A variety of wildlife likely use the largely forested habitats in the project area. Big game winter and summer range exists in the project area.

Under the No-Action Alternative, no changes in wildlife disturbance or use would be anticipated. No changes to existing habitats would be anticipated. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.

Under the Action Alternative, no appreciable changes in disturbance or displacement would be anticipated in the short-term. Some potential for long-term disturbance could be anticipated with the potential for increased road use. No appreciable changes in big game winter range would be anticipated; slight reductions in summer range could occur with the proposed construction of less than ½ mile of restricted road (segment I-J Flat- Pardee). No appreciable changes to wildlife use of the project area would be anticipated. The proposed road easements are located away from fish bearing streams and no new stream crossings are proposed.

Thus, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to any terrestrial, avian, or aquatic species could be anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The Whiskey Gulch parcel is in the grizzly bear 'non-recovery occupied habitat' area and the other parcels are outside of the grizzly bear recovery zone and the non-recovery occupied habitat area. Some potential lynx habitats exist in the Whiskey Gulch and Flat Pardee areas. Potential habitat for pileated woodpeckers, flammulated owls, and gray wolves exist in portions of the project area. No wetlands or aquatic sensitive species were identified that may be impacted.

Under the No-Action Alternative, no changes in use or available habitats would be anticipated. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species would be anticipated.

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC would gain access and grant access. In the Whiskey Gulch area, DNRC is gaining access, but no further actions are proposed and any further actions in that parcel would be analyzed separately. No effects to grizzly bears would be anticipated in that parcel from gaining access on existing roads. Similarly, no effects to grizzly bears would be anticipated in the other parcels which are outside of the recovery zone and 'non-recovery occupied habitat' areas. No changes to existing lynx habitats would be anticipated; proposed road construction would not occur in lynx habitats. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to grizzly bears or Canada lynx would be anticipated.

No changes to potential flammulated owl, pileated woodpecker, or gray wolf habitat or use by those species would be anticipated with exchanging access. Minor amounts of habitat for gray wolves and flammulated owls could be altered in the future with the proposed construction of a new, restricted road, but would not be expected to appreciably alter use of the project area by those species. Collectively, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to sensitive species would be anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

In August of 2013 a scoping letter was sent to the CSKT Tribes for the Club-Charette Fire Salvage timber sale project. The general project area for the salvage timber sale includes the new road construction segment

proposed within the Flat Pardee area. The response letter from the Tribal Cultural Preservation office stated the salvage timber sale proposal had been reviewed for cultural resources and they were not aware of any cultural resources that could be impacted by the project. All remaining roads involved in the SWLO portion of the Stimson 4 reciprocal access project are already in existence and would not require additional land disturbance.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE) on state land. This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that two cultural resource sites (24GN343 and 24GN347) are located on Section 36, T12N R13W. Both are lithic scatters, and neither has been evaluated to determine if they are heritage properties. Proposed reciprocal access will have No Effect on either of these cultural resources.

The state parcels (and adjoining lands) in Sections 10, 14, and 15, T17N R26W are within the arbitrarily defined boundaries of 24MN263 (The Keystone-Iron Mountain Mining District). The state parcels within these three aforementioned sections have been largely inventoried to Class III standards in response to a past timber sale and a past land exchange proposal. No cultural features associated with 24MN263, or any other cultural remains, were identified on these state parcels.

The DNRC has concluded that the proposed reciprocal access agreement will have *No Effect to Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposal. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The parcels involved are in forested mountainous terrain and are located away from major metropolitan areas. Adjacent land ownership includes National Forest, industrial forest, and small private lands.

No Action: No Impacts

Action: The exchange of road access easements on existing roads would not impact aesthetics. The construction of new road (Segment I-J Flat Pardee) is located high on a moderately steep south facing slope adjacent to heavily roaded industrial forest land and a major power transmission line (BPA Garrison to Taft). The new road would not be visible from populated areas. There is a minor effect to aesthetics associated with the new road construction.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No particularly limited resources have been identified.

No Action: No impacts

Action: The exchange of road access easements on existing roads would reduce the need for creation of new (duplicate) road systems. The new road construction (Segment I-J on Flat-Pardee) would also be a shared road utilized for management of lands owned by both SLC and DNRC.

Exchange of road easements would provide access to resources owned by each party that would otherwise be legally isolated, thereby increasing the amount of land and resources available to each party.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

DNRC recently completed (February 2014) the Club-Charette Fire Salvage EA on lands involved with the Flat Pardee Project.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No Action: No change

Action: The granting and acquisition of access on existing roads would not appreciably change use of these roads. Since use is not expected to appreciably change minor effects to human health and safety would be expected.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The granting and acquisition of access easements on existing roads would not appreciably change use of the lands accessed by these roads. Temporary authorizations will become perpetual easements.

Construction of new road at Flat-Pardee would provide access to approximately 70 acres of DNRC land and 20 acres of SLC land that was previously economically inaccessible for logging purposes.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

There would be a minor short-term increase in employment associated with new road construction (segment I-J Flat Pardee).

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Minor or no change is expected as a result of implementation of this proposal.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Minor or no change is expected as a result of implementation of this proposal.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Minor or no change is expected as a result of implementation of this proposal.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

None of the parcels involved provide access to wilderness areas. Recreational use is dispersed and includes hiking, hunting, ATV/Snowmobile use, picnicking, berry picking and firewood gathering. Under the proposed action, motorized and non-motorized access would not appreciably change.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

A grant of permanent access to SLC on the Rattler Gulch existing road has the potential to add additional traffic to the road system on trust land being maintained by the Rattler Gulch Road User Association. DNRC intends to place a restriction in the easement deed to SLC whereby DNRC retains the right to require the easement holder to become a part of the Rattler Gulch Road User Association. By retaining this right DNRC can insure that maintenance responsibilities are equally shared by all users of the road.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Minor or no change is expected as a result of implementation of this proposal

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Minor or no change is expected as a result of implementation of this proposal

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Securing perpetual "all lawful purpose" road access easements would allow both SLC and DNRC to capture the full value of their properties. This action would allow DNRC and the Board of Land Commissioners to better realize their responsibility "(a) to secure the greatest measure of legitimate and reasonable advantage to the state and (b) provide for the long term financial support of education" as outlined in 77-1-202 MCA.

As the Stimson 4 name implies, this action is one project proposal consistent with a general agreement between Stimson Lumber Company and the Trust Land Management Division of the Montana DNRC to reciprocate granting of access to property owned by each party.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Robert H. Storer	Date: 3/21/2014
	Title: Trust Lands Program Manager – Southwestern Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I select the action alternative described above: Proceeding with implementation of the Southwest land Office portion of the Stimson 4 reciprocal access agreement. As described in section 24 of the EA, this alternative enhances DNRC's ability to manage the school trust lands for their intended purposes.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

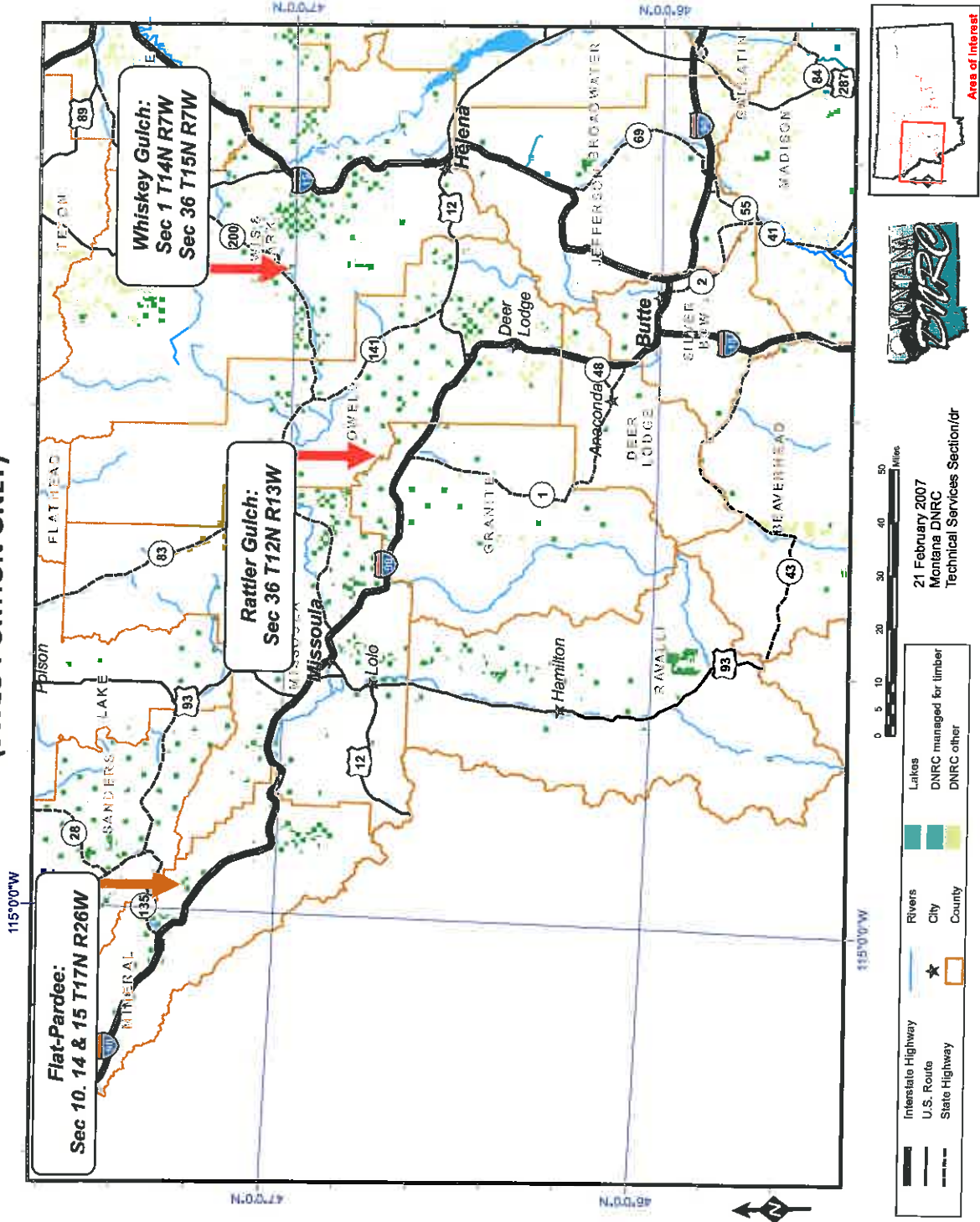
Implementation of this project will not cause significant impacts. Constructing and granting easements for use on roads on school trust is not an unusual activity. The impacts associated with this action are reasonably certain. There are no major growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting effects. The quantity and quality of environmental resources will not be substantially affected. There are no unusually unique or sensitive resources impacted. The importance of the resources affected does not rise to the level of significance. As noted in section 24 this is one of a series of reciprocal access projects undertaken with Stimson Lumber Company. It is not a precedent setting action. The evaluation in Sections 2, 13 & 19 illustrates there are no major conflicts with laws, requirements or formal plans. Section 24 illustrates that not selecting the action alternative may create a greater conflict with legal direction for managing trust lands.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS
 ☐ More Detailed EA
 ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Mike O'Herron
	Title: Area Manager Southwestern Land Office
Signature: <i>Michael O'Herron</i>	
Date: 4/2/2014	

STIMSON 4 RECIPROCAL ACCESS PROJECT VICINITY MAP (SWLO PORTION ONLY)





36

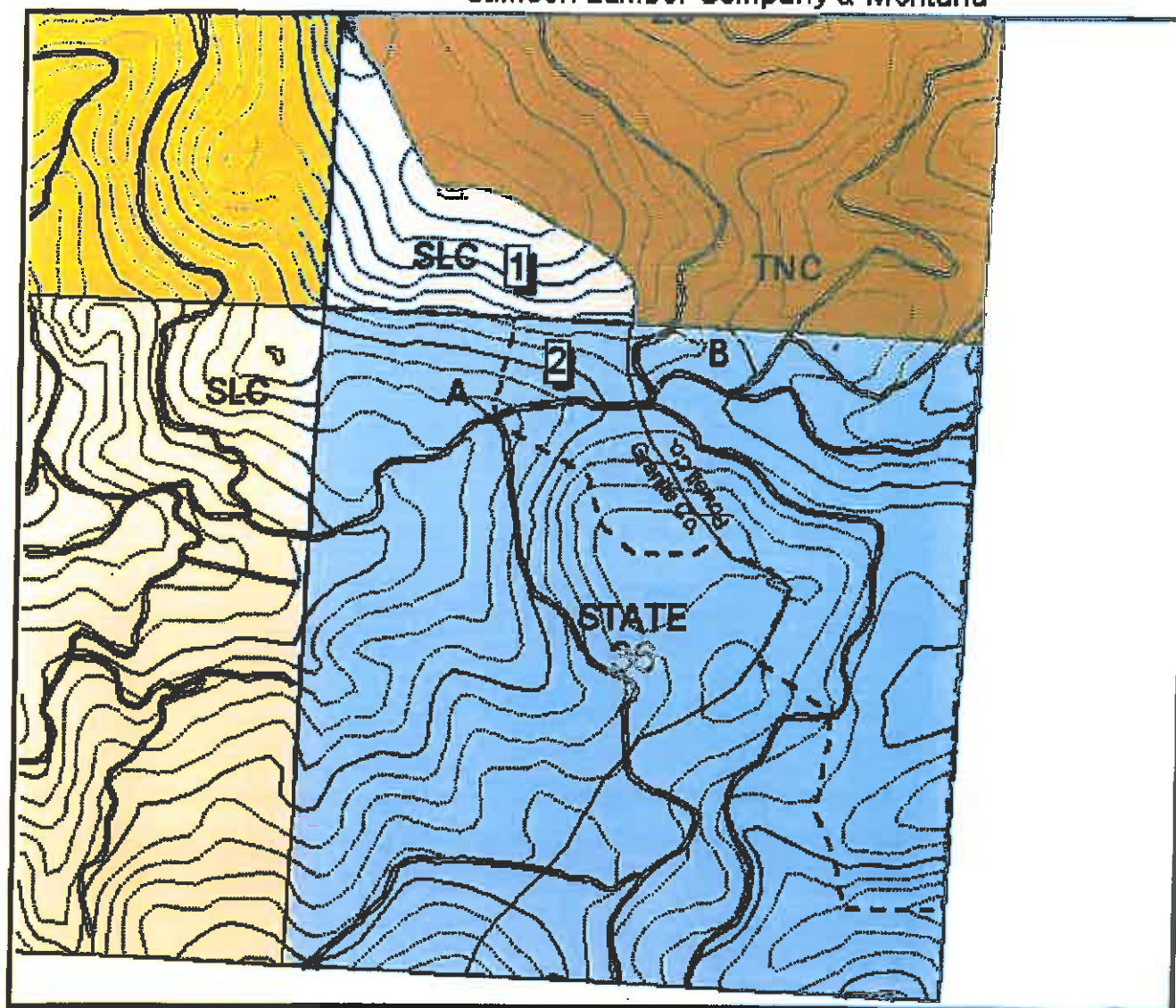
Whiskey Gulch - Sec 38 T15N-R7W, Sec 1 T14N-R7W

Stimson 4 RAA



Stimson Grant to DNRC

Printed: Feb 25, 2014



Rattler Gulch
T12N, R13W, P.M.M.

Road Length: 2,110 ft.
Trib Area 1: 65 acres
Trib Area 2: 218 acres

Legend

	Tributary Area Number		Stimson Lumber
	Tributary Area Boundary		State of Montana
	Easement from State to Stimson		TNC
	Road		BLM
	Contours		
	200 ft Index		
	40 ft Contour		

Scale: 1:10,000

Date: 8/5/2013

Map Type: Trib Area

County: Granite

Prepared By: BCannata

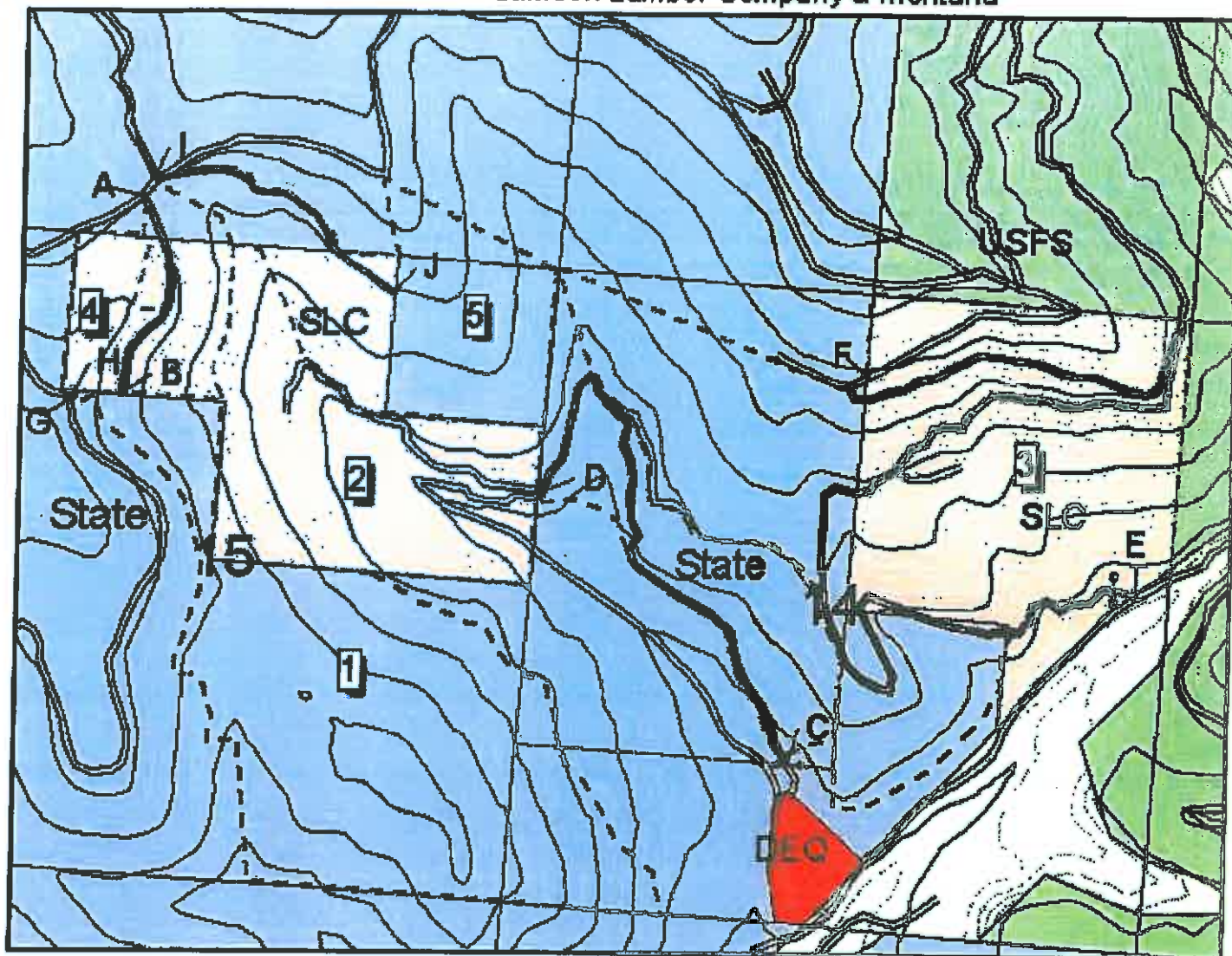




STIMSON LUMBER COMPANY

STIMSON #4
RECIPROCAL ACCESS AGREEMENT
Stimson Lumber Company & Montana

Exhibit A
(Sheet X of X)



Flat Pardee

Sections 10, 14 & 15, T17N, R26W, P.M.M.

Legend

	Tributary Area Number		Stimson Lumber
	Tributary Area Boundary		State of Montana
	Shared Access Road		USFS
	Road		DEQ
	Contours		Gates
	200 ft Index		
	40 ft Contour		

Scale: 1:10000

Date: 12/18/13

Map Type: Trib Area

County: Mineral

Prepared By: B. Cannata

